COLORADO MEDICAID TO PROVIDE DENTAL COVERAGE

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DENVER – May 9, 2013 – The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (Department) announced today that adults in Medicaid will have access to preventive dental care when legislation, SB 13-242, is implemented in April 2014. The legislation is expected to be signed into law by Gov. John Hickenlooper this weekend.

"This new law is an example of curbing the cost of health care by providing the right service at the right time in the right place," said Susan E. Birch executive director. "Rather than rely on the emergency room for treatment, it is safer for our clients and more cost-effective for the state to fund preventive care and fillings at a dentist's office."

The legislation, SB 13-242, will create a limited Medicaid dental benefit for adults. Children with Medicaid and the Child Health Plan *Plus* already have dental benefits. Currently, if adult Medicaid clients have a severe cavity, they seek care at an emergency room or have emergency extractions in the dental office/clinic, even if the tooth could be saved and filled at a lower cost. Studies show that the cost of providing preventive dental care is potentially ten times less expensive than managing symptoms of dental disease in emergency rooms.

The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing has estimated that providing a limited dental benefit for adults with Medicaid will reduce costs for dental related emergency room visits by \$700,000 in General Funds for FY 2013-14 (first three months after implementation) and \$1.6 million for FY 2014-15. Before the law is implemented in April 2014, the Department will convene a group of dental experts and other stakeholders to review and advise what the limited benefit should include.

About the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing: The department administers the Medicaid and Child Health Plan *Plus* programs as well as a variety of other programs for low-income Coloradans, families, children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with disabilities. The mission of the department is to improve health care access and outcomes for the people we serve while demonstrating sound stewardship of financial resources . For more information about the department, please visit Colorado.gov/hcpf.